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DROUGHT'S EFFECT ON WATERFOWL APPALLING, DECLARES HENDERSON

The long-continued drought has wrought havoc on the great breeding grounds of our ducks, geese, and other waterfowl, W. C. Henderson, associate chief of the Bureau of Biological Survey, U. S. Department of Agriculture, told the Western Association of the State Game and Fish Commissioners at their 14th annual conference in Portland, Oregon, June 14 to 16.

"It is clearly up to the people of the United States," he declared, "to do something to minimize the difficulties that thus menace our birds."

The waterfowl situation, said Mr. Henderson, is nothing short of appalling in some parts of the Middle-Western States formerly important as nurseries for these birds, and conditions are extremely bad on the breeding areas in Iowa, Nebraska, Minnesota, and the Dakotas, and in Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, and Wisconsin.

Throughout the Canadian Provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, and most of our Northwestern States, he explained, there has been a disastrous shortage of rainfall during the past four years. "This catastrophe," he pointed out, "was preceded by a 10-year period during which the rainfall was below normal."

Outlines 3-Fold Plan

After emphasizing the necessity for "extraordinary efforts to preserve an adequate supply" of breeding birds, Mr. Henderson outlined the Biological Survey's 3-fold plan of wild-life restoration. This plan, he explained, includes: (1) a more intensive law-enforcement campaign; (2) improvement of wildfowl sanctuaries

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now under the administration of the Biological Survey; and, (3) prompt and systematic acquisition of more refuge areas.

Designating the increase of refuge areas as the most important of the Biological Survey objectives in this plan, Mr. Henderson reported that the Bureau during the last few weeks has compiled maps and lists of prospective refuges. The Bureau, he said, is now ready to go ahead on the acquisition program as soon as it has available the necessary funds, of which there is in prospect about $6\frac{1}{2}$ millions of dollars.

In explaining the program for law enforcement Mr. Henderson said: "What additional restrictions may be necessary as to seasonal limits, bag limits, etc., cannot be determined until our field investigations have been completed. The aim, however, will be to interfere no more than is necessary with reasonable shooting practices and privileges, and in all regions to provide gunners with opportunities as nearly equal as it is possible to make them."

Discusses Other Wild-Life Problems

Mr. Henderson also discussed outstanding problems in big-game management, in the administration of fur resources, and in combating wild-life disease.

"Few people," he said, "realize that the supply of American raw furs is in jeopardy, and not all who do realize it have a clear conception of its implications. A tragedy has resulted in part from lack of basic biological knowledge and inadequate public appreciation of the need for conserving the fur resources. The total annual catch of fur animals in the United States used to be conservatively valued at \$65,000,000. Financial conditions and continued decrease in the natural supply have reduced the value of the annual catch to \$20,000,000. Fifteen years ago more minks were trapped annually in Maine than are now taken in the entire United States. There are innumerable other phases of fur-conservation problems that need the support of enlightened public opinion, without which the solution to

the problem is practically impossible.

"The present system of fur-animal conservation," he declared, "has not proved effective. The problem is national in its ramifications, and the seriousness of the situation is such that a coordinated national policy based on scientific findings should be established throughout the ranges of all fur animals."

Sees Encouraging Developments

In concluding his address, the Biological Survey official said: "Despite the effects of a long series of natural disasters occurring to practically all forms of wild life by reason of the drought of the past few years and other damaging influences, including over-shooting and over-trapping, we have justification at least for some slight degree of encouragement at the present time. Sportsmen and conservationists are awake to conditions and are manifesting a determination to correct them. There is evidence too that wild-life conservation matters in the United States are emerging from the period of trial and error and that, based on research and experimentation, sound practices are being developed that will form the fabric of the new policy for the restoration of our wild-life resources."

"Success is not yet assured. It will depend almost entirely upon the ability of every State and Federal conservation agency, and almost, I might say, upon the ability of every individual sportsman, to recognize the crisis, and putting aside all other considerations, to unite as never before in support of a coordinated effort to restore a heritage that has been well nigh lost through lack in the past of this essential cooperation."